Increase in forest area in Guwahati

*94. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that leopards are coming into the city of Guwahati due to shrinking of forests; and

(b) if so, what action has been taken to increase the forest area so that wild animals do not enter the residential areas?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) Guwahati city has large number of forest hillocks abutting the city. Over the years, the city made inroads into these forests and the recent instances of leopards coming into the colonies is due to the fact that these colonies have been established in the erstwhile natural habitats of these leopards. So far, no human deaths have been reported. Some killing of livestock does takes place. The State Government captures such leopards and relocate them into other wildlife habitats. The disabled leopards which are difficult to rehabilitate are kept in the State Zoo.

(b) The forest area in the State is about 30% of its geographic area which is higher than the average forest area of the country. Even then afforestation programmes are being carried out under the State Plan as well as Centrally Sponsored Schemes. Earmaking of funds for afforestation purpose has been made for north-eastern States. The Supreme Court *vide* its order dated 12.12.96 has extended the applicability of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, to these areas which are covered under the dictionary sense of the forest in addition to the areas already notified as forests. The State Government has been asked to furnish details of encroachments that have been made in the forests to ensure that no further encroachments are made in future.

Intereonnecting Primary Health Centres

†*95. SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH:
SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH:

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.